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Edw. M. M.

DESCRIPTIVE POEM
OF THE
CALAMITY AT LAWRENCE,

JANUARY 10, 1860.

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A

DESCRIPTIVE POEM *995-*
1246

OF THE

SAD CALAMITY

AT

LAWRENCE, MASS.

Tuesday, January 10, 1860.

BY AN EYE WITNESS.

Wait, Peter.

BOSTON:

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DESCRIPTIVE POEM.

In Lawrence, busy humming city,
There late befel a scene of pity,
A scene uneaualled in our land.
An awful scene sublime and grand.

At twilight's hour at eventide,
When witches are supposed to ride,
When twinkling stars begin to fall—
When darkness settles over all,

When mill hands sup and then return,
Where their daily bread they earn,
Laughing happily and gay,
Anticipating close of day,—

The town was lighted up with gas,
The marts were open wide,
The busy people all engaged,
For it was eventide.

No direful news was then abroad—
No bloody deeds to tell ;
But all seemed happy, blithe and gay,
As any marriage bell.

The busy humming of the mills
 Came on the evening air,
 And cheerfulness set on the hearts
 Of people every where.

And in the mills a cheerful scene—
 Maids walking to and fro,
 Machines a whizing all around ;
 The looms upon the go.

The spinning mules drawing out,
 The bobbins on the whiz ;
 What means this busy active gait,
 Has fabrics lately riz ?

The overseers flying round,
 The gas is lighting up,
 The people had been flocking in
 From whence they'd been to sup.

And in the counting-rooms the clerks
 Were silently employed ;
 Made cheery by the firey stove,
 Its genial warmth enjoyed.

'Tis five o'clock, that fatal hour,
 'Twill long remembered be.
 Who could foretell the sad event
 That I'll relate to thee ?

When, hark ! what sudden sound was that ?
 Which smote upon the ear,
 O nothing but a gust of wind !
 Which all might plainly hear.

But hark again ! the sounds increase !

It does pervade the air,
It verily seemeth overhead,
It seemeth *every* where.

Who ever heard the like before ?

Sure that is not the wind ;
It seemeth like the ocean's roar,
Or something of the kind.

No 'tis not like the windy gale ;
Nor like the ocean's roar,
It sounds like what I never heard,
No ; never heard before.

There's something in it terrible,
Foreboding—startling, wild !
To cause the stoutest hearts to quake,
As doth a frightened child.

How was it at the Pemberton ?
When near a thousand lives
Were peacefully engaged in toil,
Those daughters, sons and wives.

A little while before the sounds
Began to stir the air :
All lighting up so cheerfully,
So happy blithe and fair.

Those weakened walls began to bend,
And threaten thus to fall ;
While unconsciously beneath
Without a warning call—

Those innocent and happy souls
 Were busy in their rooms,
 Warping, spinning, carding,
 And some were tending looms.

See ! see ! those threatening walls do bend !
 How silently—how still ;
 See ! laughing damsels stand beneath,
 O how the blood does chill.

Anon, the crash ! the building falls,
 Bricks and mortar fly,
 Crushed in horrid agony,
 A swarm of beings lie.

Now hear ! Oh God ! the direful cry,
 Chaos sends forth its wail,
 Heart-rending sounds of agony
 Are mingling with the gale.

Mangled and bruised are manly forms
 Struggling in vain,
 Innocence and beauty too
 Will ne'r see light again.

Now bloody forms are creeping forth,
 Mangled—bruised and torn,
 But few escaped without a hurt
 But very few I learn.

And some were there who might escape,
 But that was not to be ;
 'Twas not sufficient, there must be
 Increased calamity.

A hole was cut with honest hands,
 Down through a fallen floor,
 With kind intent to rescue such
 As were not killed before.

A lantern then was lowered down
 To light the dismal den,
 To shed its faint and glimmering light
 Among those dying men.

Lo! there machines of every sort,
 Which cotton mills contain,
 Lay bruised and broken all about,
 Not fit for use again.

And human bodies bruised and dead,
 Lay weltering in their gore;
 Oh! such a sight was never seen
 In Lawrence town before.

And others in their dying groans
 For succor cry in vain,
 One sought relief by suicide
 To ease his mortal pain.

Others again who might escape
 Without a single ill,
 Had not an accident took place,
 Which makes our blood run chill.

A lantern from a nervous hand,
 Fell and broke to smash,
 A spark among the cotton caught,
 Which caused an instant flash

This subtle element soon spread
 Beneath those fallen floors,
 That horrid den was filled with shrieks
 More dreadful than before.

Fire! fire!! sounded forth
 Upon the evening air ;
 The bells repeat the alarming cry,
 Soon all the town was there.

Thus quickly spread the news abroad,
 And anxious people went
 To save those suffering precious souls
 Was their kind intent.

The firemen, that faithful band
 Did fight with swelling hearts,
 Each ready when his turn came round
 To do a manly part.

The Mayor and the men of note
 Labored at the brake,
 What glorious examples
 Such worthy men do make.

The women worked like heroes there,
 Deserving every praise,
 Rescuing friends they dearly loved,
 Impediments to raze.

And Oliver was everywhere
 That noble hearted man ;
 Clear-headed 'mid the greatest noise
 Doing all a mortal can.

But all in vain those firemen
 Played upon the heap,
 Those floors like roofs the water turned,
 The fires raged beneath.

Three parties found alive and well
 Were heard to speak and pray,
 And would have been rescued by friends,
 Were they not drove away.

One man took hold of his friend's hand.
 And partly out was drawn ;
 The raging flames drove off his friend
 Who left him thus alone.

Some made their wills, what should be done
 With all their worldly store ;
 Then bade farewell to their dear friends
 Who never saw them more.

Two girls, one man, were spoken to,
 Who said they were not harmed,
 When suddenly the girls cried out
 " Oh God ! we shall be burned."

A company of little girls
 Hemmed in by all around
 Without the faintest hope of life,
 Hot flames were pouring down—

Did sing with clear unbroken voice
 Like martyrs famed in story,
 With voices Heavenly musical,
 " Were going home to glory."

A faith like this is joy indeed,
 A boon to hold in fee;
 Worth more to cheer a dying soul
 Than doubtful Infidelity

The scorching fires raged beneath,
 No rescuing hand could stay,
 The fiery billows roaring loud
 Drove all help away.

And now behold the mouldering mass;
 All is hushed within.
 Weeping friends stood all around
 Mourning for kith and kin.

Enough! Enough of horror now,
 Let me relate no more.
 You now shall hear of some escapes,]
 Safe, happy and secure.

One lady I've forgot her name
 With quick and ready mind,
 Looked for a way to save herself :
 Which she did quickly find.

Many incidents took place
 Hair breadth escapes and true,
 But such as I have heard relate
 I now will tell to you.

'Twas when the mill began to fall,
 She sprang into the hoisting gear,
 Slid down five stories in a wink,
 'Twas thus she did get clear.

A man who saw the bending wall
 Ran quickly to the L,
 And saved himself with fainting breath,
 While the main part fell.

A Mr. Adams found himself
 Wedged in beneath a beam,
 He heard a footstep overhead
 A man's step it did seem.

Up through a crevice overhead
 He saw a friend indeed,
 "Go bring a saw from yonder mill
 A saw which I do need?"

His friend ran and procured the saw
 Passed in through the crevice down,
 Poor Adams bent it up like tin,
 It was insufficient found.

An axe! an axe! next Adams cried,
 His cry was not in vain,
 It was wanted with the handle short.
 His liberty to gain.

A double door with rivets in,
 He could not saw nor hew;
 But hacked it with his shortened axe,
 In narrow limits too.

Successful toil met its reward,
 But desperate was the strife,
 He knew the flames were creeping on,
 But O how sweet is life.

When extricated then he felt
 His strength a failing fast,
 When his fainting fit was o'er,
 "Thank God ! I'm safe at last."

Another case I will relate,
 About a little boy
 Not quite a dozen years of age,
 Perhaps his parents' joy !

He labored in an upper room,
 The bricks began to fall ;
 He smuggled in a box of waste,
 Came down among them all.

Far down among the broken mass
 Lay ensconced the boy,
 When the rescuers took him out
 Strait home he scud for joy.

A little girl ten years of age
 Was found upon her face ;
 Here feet were widely spread apart
 Nor could she change her place.

An iron mass of thousand pounds
 Lay between her feet,
 A heavy beam across her back
 Did hold her down complete.

On either side a jammed machine,
 Her arm was in a ring,
 A horizontal pillory
 To keep her body in.

Yet strange to say they got her out.
 (So the papers tell.)

Now was not this most wonderful,
 She's now alive and well.

All Tuesday night the citizens
 Did toil with worthy zest,
 Rescuing bodies from the wreck,
 But few did sleep or rest.

The hearse was driven to and fro
 Up to the City Hall,
 Conveying dying persons thence
 Beneath its funeral pall.

The Hall became a hospital,
 The City Hall the same ;
 Where the dead were all conveyed,
 And so were all the lame.

Some were burned into a crisp,
 A sad and sickening sight !
 Some with broken legs and arms,
 And others wounded slight.

One man was found with broken skull,
 A piece gone off his head,
 His brain was found entirely whole—
 Of course the man was dead.

A girl was found whose head and limbs
 Were burned into a crisp,
 A locket did reveal her name,
 A locket on her breast.

The Mills have stopt and business is
 Nearly at a stand,
 The coffin-makers were much drove
 To get their wares on hand.

Bodies sent to distant towns,
 Coffined up with care,
 Labelled to their distant friends
 To find a burial there.

Charred remains unrecognized,
 Rough boxes did receive,
 Were buried several in a box,
 No friends to mourn and grieve.

The undertaker night and day,
 And coffin-makers too
 Have had to hurry on their work
 With more than they could do.

One coffin-maker said he sold
 Of coffins thirty-nine,
 Besides supplies from other where,
 Death's harvest has been fine.

For days a gang of forty men
 Were kept upon the ground,
 Carefully they picked and dug,
 And many bodies found.

And Sabbath day still kept at work,
 That gang of earnest men ;
 Deeming it a sacred task
 To be employed then.

Policemen stationed all about
 To guard with honest care
 The ruins and the charred remains
 Of those still buried there.

Strangers in vehicles came
 To gaze in silent awe,
 And mutely view destruction's work
 Unequal 'cept in war.

Selecting fragments of the same
 To show to distant friends (or kin)
 That they may see and then believe
 About the dreadful scene.

'Twould melt a heart of adamant
 To walk among the slain,
 To look upon the gastly dead
 And hear the groans of pain—

To see the stricken hearted men
 Who never wept before,
 Kneel beside their children dear
 Upon that bloody floor.

To see a mother's stooping form,
 Bowed down with grief and woe,
 With frantic anguish o'er her child
 While scalding tears do flow.

To see a loving sister too
 Beside a sister dead,
 Or cheer a brother's dying form,
 Support that brother's head. ****

Physicians who require no fee,
 Are there to lend their aid,
 Samaritans like these you know
 Are paid in gratitude.

In woman's form the angels were
 Among the souls of grief,
 With heavenly sympathy of heart,
 Affording great relief.

The lady who slid down the gear
 And saved herself so well,
 Was there all night administering
 With judgment, grace and skill.

Great praise is due to courage great,
 Such duties to perform ;
 Who never falter when the time—
 To ACT and DO comes on.

Mayor Saunders gave out word
 For all to sign their names
 Who had a friend or were themselves
 Connected with the same.

Unto the Essex counting house
 The multitude resort,
 Grief written with the pen of fear
 To hear and make report.

Much information thus was gained
 'Bout those who did escape,
 But how the accident took place
 And those who met their fate—

I saw it in an "extra" sheet
 Printed in the town,
 A very lengthy list of names
 From top to bottom down.

First a list of those found dead,
 Three score names and more,
 Cut and mangled awfully,
 Burnt and jamed and tore. *

Next the badly injured came
 One hundred—17,
 Bruised and crippled some for life,
 No sadder sight oft seen.

Many slightly injured, did
 Escape with little ill;
 One hundred souls and 69
 Did thus escape the mill.

A list of "missing" at the foot
 Of this long column stands—
 Most likely charred and burned to death
 Beneath the fiery brands.

I might go on and so relate
 Almost in endless rhyme,
 Many untold incidents
 Which happened at the time.

Another lad was taken out
 Who used the Indian weed,
 When he found himself alive
 Walked off quite cool indeed—

——*It has since been ascertained that 109 were dead and missing.

Drew forth his pipe, prepared to smoke
 With perfect *nonchalance*—
 As though his narrow s'cape with life
 Was but a common chance.

A Mrs. Luck and daughters four
 A family of five,
 Had a narrow chance for life,
 But all got out alive.

She gathered her four daughters all
 About her in the night,
 Kneeled and fervently she prayed
 And thanked the God of Light.

They happened to be near a door
 And thus escaped with speed
 Deeming it a *lucky* chance,
 I think 'twas *luck* indeed.

The news was quickly spread abroad
 On telegraphic wire—
 Strangers came from far and near
 To view this awful fire.

Pickpockets—thieves and gamblers too,
 Came in to ply their trade,
 Pity a chain gang could not be
 Of reprobates thus made.

The police should set them all to work
 The rubbish clear away—
 Keep them on a crust of bread
 And whip them every day.

I'de like to be a looker on
 And see them sweat and toil,
 Such heartles villains ought to get
 Kicks instead of spoil.

Boston sent policemen on
 I was rejoiced to hear,
 They got a hint " 'twas time to go,"
 Which made them disappear.

A gentle snow in downy flakes
 Spread her mantle white,
 Clothing in spotless purity
 The melancholy site.

What fitter emblem could be had
 To sooth the hearts desire ?
 The clouds sent down a funeral pall
 To clothe this funeral pyre.

APPEAL.

PART SECOND.

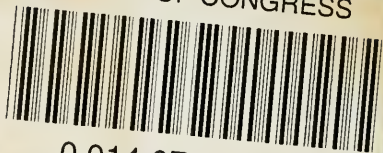
I went to the city a stranger, to see
 For myself what now I relate unto thee.
 All merriment has ceased, their voices are low,
 Dejected in look, their paces are slow.
 In groups do they stand, 'bout corners and courts
 In undertones speak with solemn discourse—
 They speak of the dead with bosoms of pain—
 To speak in their praise none will refrain.

And children look grave who are wont to be gay,
 Their sporting has ceased—they've forgotten their play.
 The dogs keep their kennels, or if they come out
 Go creeping in humble demeanor about.
 One meets on the street with people who are
 In bandages drest and patched up with care,
 And scores of victims confined to their homes
 Groaning with pain—bewailing with moans.
 One lost an eye, or a leg, or an arm,
 'Twas a wonder so many escaped without harm.
 O 'tis a city of cripples, of mourning and woe,
 Sad hearts and sad faces wherever you go.
 How many will suffer from want and from care,
 Do all that we may—spare all we can spare.
 The company tomb—the home of the dead
 Is crowded with coffins near to the bulk head.
 The snow was kept trodden by mourners who go
 In measured pace both solemn and slow.
 The hearse was kept running for many a day
 Taking burnt bodies in coffins away.
 Enough, enough, I will close the sad theme
 Though terribly true yet it seems like a dream—
 'Tis a time to act, the good and the true
 Will never hold back—I appeal unto you
 When the heart of the miser relaxeth at hold,
 And giveth up alms in pieces of gold;
 But you buy my Poem, the profit shall go
 To aid the poor people—the victims of woe.



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